PROTECTING ENDANGERED SPECIES AND SENSITIVE HABITATS

— *A legacy for future generations*

The plant and animal species in the Wider Caribbean Region represent the greatest concentration of biodiversity in the Atlantic Ocean Basin. In the region, 76% of all species are threatened by habitat loss or modification. Additional threats to plant and animal species include over-exploitation and degradation due to unsustainable practices such as over-fishing, unplanned coastal development and pollution.

THE CARIBBEAN ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME (CEP)

The Caribbean Environment Programme (CEP) supports member countries with the implementation of the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols. CEP was created by 28 member countries of the region in 1981 to promote regional co-operation and co-ordination for the protection and management of the region's coastal and marine resources.

These countries encircle the Caribbean Sea and the Gulf of Mexico, from as far north as the eastern coast of Florida in the United States to as far south as French Guiana.

The Convention area includes the island nations and territories of the insular Caribbean, and Mexico, Central America and the north coast of South America.

WHICH SPECIES ARE PROTECTED BY SPAW?

One year after the SPAW Protocol was adopted, the Parties to the Cartagena Convention established lists of marine and coastal species requiring protection in the form of three Annexes to the Protocol:

- Annex I: endangered plant species
- Annex II: endangered animal species
- Annex III: protected plants and animals to be maintained at a sustainable level

A Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC), of government-designated experts and experts from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and scientific institutions, was established by the Protocol. The STAC plays a pivotal role in recommending to the Contracting Parties the species to be listed in the Annexes. The STAC provides a unique opportunity for governments, NGOs and other experts to meet and reach consensus on biodiversity issues relevant to SPAW and other Caribbean conventions.

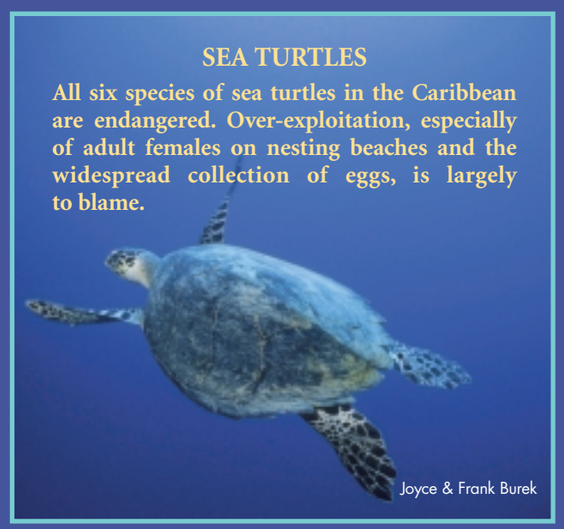
Recognizing the dynamic nature of ecosystems and species protection, the SPAW Protocol allows for the listing or removal of additional species following specific criteria developed by the Parties for this purpose.


Marion Bacon

FISH

Excess nutrients and pesticides degrade coral reefs, making near-shore environments unsuitable for some fish species.

Over-harvesting and pollution deplete shark and fish stocks faster than they can recover from natural population growth.


Joyce & Frank Burek

SEA TURTLES

All six species of sea turtles in the Caribbean are endangered. Over-exploitation, especially of adult females on nesting beaches and the widespread collection of eggs, is largely to blame.

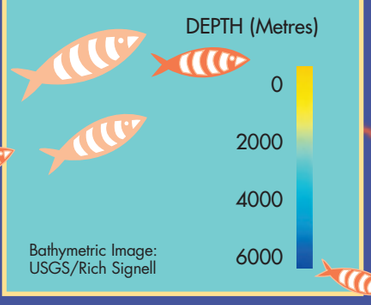

Alejandro Avampini

MANATEES

The West Indian manatee faces threats from boats and poachers, as well as habitat loss from coastal development.

THE CARIBBEAN SEA

The physical environment of the Caribbean Sea (over four million km²), with deep water basins, estuaries, oceanic islands and varied bottom topography, as well as shallow offshore sand banks and coral reefs, provides a diverse range of conditions and habitats that suit a variety of species.




Clay Wiseman

CORAL REEFS

Pollution from industry and agriculture, erosion, sewage and the over-exploitation of fisheries, are major threats to coral reefs and to the valuable species and resources they sustain.

SPINY LOBSTERS

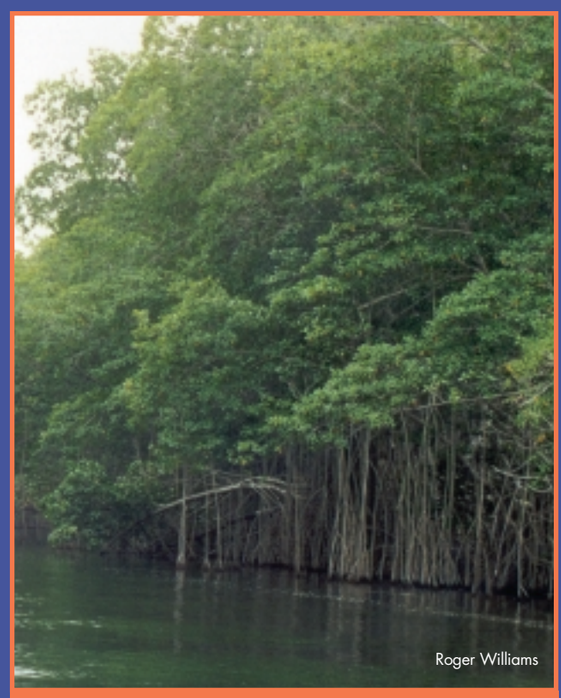
Human pressures, such as over-harvesting, take a particular toll on many commercial species.


H. Hall, OSF

DOLPHINS AND WHALES

Hundreds of thousands of dolphins and whales die worldwide each year in fishing nets. For migratory species that cross national boundaries, protection is critical.


IFAW


Roger Williams

MANGROVES AND SEA GRASS BEDS

Mangroves and sea grass beds are being altered and destroyed by construction, dredging and anchoring, threatening the biodiversity that contributes to the health, beauty and economy of the Caribbean region. For example, mangroves provide nurseries for many important commercial fisheries species, such as lobster and conch. As mangrove areas are destroyed by development, coastlines become more vulnerable to erosion, storms and hurricanes.